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FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6076
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000397

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MK](#)
SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION REACH
AGREEMENT ON POLITICAL DIALOGUE TEXT

REF: SKOPJE 387 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) After several months of political talks (reftel), governing VMRO-DPMNE and eAlbanian opposition DUI have reached agreement on the text of a draft proposal that addresses DUI's key policy concerns and would end that party's parliamentary boycott. DUI President Ahmeti wants the agreement concluded with a signing ceremony. Prime Minister Gruevski, however, prefers that the Embassy and EUSR witness the event, without any signing ceremony. We believe a compromise arrangement is possible, perhaps a joint press statement committing both sides to implementation of the agreement. If the two sides conclude the agreement, and DUI returns to Parliament, that will signal a return to political normalcy in Macedonia. Both sides, however, will have to exert themselves to implement the terms of the agreement, some of which will prove politically contentious for other parties in the Parliament. End summary.

AGREEMENT ON TEXT ON POLITICAL DIALOGUE POINTS

¶2. (SBU) After several months of negotiations (reftel), governing VMRO-DPMNE and eAlbanian opposition DUI reached agreement over the May 19-20 weekend on the text of a draft proposal that would address priority issues of concern to DUI. In return, DUI will end its parliamentary boycott. The agreed text, brokered by the Embassy and EUSR, addresses DUI's key demands, including establishing a list of laws requiring Badinter (double majority) voting, and committing the government to reconstitute the parliamentary Inter-ethnic Relations Committee (IEC), which decides whether draft legislation requires a Badinter vote.

¶3. (SBU) The text also commits both parties to address the provision of material and social benefits for victims of the 2001 conflict (including ethnic Albanian insurgents who fought government forces), and requires VMRO and DUI delegates to draft and submit for parliamentary adoption a law on the use of languages. Working groups on both issues -- compensation for victims of conflict and a draft language law -- will continue even after DUI returns to Parliament. Finally, the parties agreed to continue discussions, upon DUI's return to Parliament, on the method of government formation (e.g., DUI's insistence that future governments be formed using the Badinter principle). The text concludes

with a sentence noting that the agreement was concluded between the two parties in the presence of representatives from the EU Mission and the U.S. Embassy.

MODALITY FOR CONCLUDING THE AGREEMENT -- THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

¶4. (SBU) Now that the two sides have agreed on the text of the agreement, DUI President Ali Ahmeti is pressing for a signing ceremony, with Ahmeti, PM Gruevski, and Embassy and EUSR representatives signing the document to give it "legal status." Gruevski does not want to sign the document; EUSR Fouere also has refused, citing EU objections to certain references in the text. As a way forward, we have proposed a joint press statement by the two parties following a formal meeting between Ahmeti and Gruevski. The statement would note that both parties reiterate their commitment to working to ensure the terms of the agreement are fully implemented. The Embassy and EUSR would then issue a joint press statement welcoming the agreement and further underscoring our own commitment to working with both parties to implement the agreement's provisions. We expect both parties to respond to our proposal by the end of this week, followed by an Ahmeti-Gruevski meeting on May 28 or 29. If all goes well, DUI could return to Parliament by June 1.

COMMENT: RETURN TO NORMALCY -- THE HARD WORK BEGINS

¶5. (SBU) If the two sides can now reach a compromise on how to conclude the agreement, and if DUI returns to Parliament as promised, we will witness a return to normalcy in Macedonia's political life after nearly eight months of political talks brokered by the Embassy and EUSR. Then the hard work will begin, as the "victims of conflict" working

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group and the "language law" working group start fleshing out the details of proposals that will be politically contentious in the Parliament.

WOHLERS